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Security Council

Seventy-second year

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New York

President:	Mr. Alemu	(Ethiopia)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (covering the period from 2 June to 1 September 2017) (S/2017/784)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (covering the period from 2 June to 1 September 2017) (S/2017/784)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. David Shearer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan; and His Excellency Mr. Festus Mogae, Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission.

Mr. Mogae is participating in today's meeting via video-teleconference from Juba.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/784, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan covering the period from 2 June to 1 September 2017.

I now give the floor to Mr. Shearer.

Mr. Shearer: I thank you, Mr. President, for this invitation to address the Security Council and touch on some critical issues in South Sudan. I will provide a brief update on the situation in the country, as well as United Nations efforts to protect civilians and build durable peace, as per our mandate.

As we approach the end of the rainy season, South Sudan remains beset by social, economic and humanitarian challenges. The Government appears emboldened by its recent military gains, including in some key strongholds of the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) that are loyal to leader Riek Machar. Deep mistrust of military forces, exacerbated by human rights abuses, fuels flights into neighbouring countries. Across the country, the opposition remains deeply fractured and has suffered significant military setbacks in recent months.

At the same time, the economic crisis is further fuelling public frustration and undermines the Government's capacity to deliver governance and services to its people. In many cases, civil servants have not been paid for over four months and salaries to security forces are also delayed. Localized conflicts continue to flare — their impact greatly magnified by automatic weapons and affecting areas outside the central conflict. There is now growing discussion about moving swiftly to elections. I continue to stress to my Government counterparts that elections must be inclusive, credible and fair, but they should also represent the consolidation of a genuine peace process.

Along with others here today, I remain deeply concerned by the humanitarian situation. This is a conflict in which the greatest number of casualties are civilians and not combatants. United Nations agencies assess that the total number of people in need is 7.6 million. The burden that humanitarians and donor countries shoulder to support those people with food, health care and education is enormous. The recent humanitarian response plan, which at one point was budgeted at $1.6 billion, is so far 66 per cent funded. I must underscore that without such humanitarian support, thousands of people would simply not survive.

The number of people displaced in South Sudan rose to nearly 4 million during the first half of this year. Of those, 2 million have fled to neighbouring countries: Uganda, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I wish to express my appreciation to those countries for shouldering that burden.

I continue to applaud the efforts made on the ground by our humanitarian partners, who reach millions of the most vulnerable people in the country. However, in critical areas, and often at critical times, communities cannot be reached because access is denied. Those include areas of the Greater Upper Nile region, parts of the Equatorias and areas south and west of Wau, where active Government military operations against the SPLA-IO continue. For example, humanitarian partners were only in the past month able to reach the populations of Bagari, outside of Wau, after being denied access for almost one year. Sustained, regular access is what is required and needed.

The splintering of opposition forces has had a negative consequence on humanitarian efforts. For example, the World Food Programme's regular convoys to Yambio — about two days travel from Juba — now require 13 separate permissions from armed groups along their route. Increasingly, combatants are shifting into criminality along major roadways, with civilian and aid convoys being a target. Two weeks ago, a driver for the International Committee of the Red Cross was killed when his relief convoy was attacked in Western Equatoria. His death brings the number of aid workers who have been killed in South Sudan just this year to 18.

Government officials need to take a more positive attitude towards our humanitarian partners, whom they often blame for creating a negative international perception of the country. Removing numerous bureaucratic impediments, including additional taxes and fees on humanitarian organizations, is required to acknowledge the valuable work that they carry out on behalf of the people of South Sudan.

As the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), we are working hard to support our humanitarian colleagues. Our modus operandi is to be robust, nimble and proactive. We have provided surge support to help protect key humanitarian facilities, such as in Bunj, in the northern part of the country. However, sadly, our missions have also included evacuating personnel during active fighting. I anticipate that, while we respect each other's mandates, that collaboration will intensify if security trends continue.

We are far from the conditions for safe return in most areas, but we are continuously looking to seize opportunities to support communities in returning to their homes, where that is possible. UNMISS will soon open a permanent presence in Yei and reinforce our presence in Torit and Yambio — all of which are in the Equatorias, to the south — to deter violence and human rights abuses and build confidence for people to return to their homes. The small Melut protection site in the north will be closing in coming weeks, in line with the desire there for people to return to their homes. We are looking at downsizing protection sites in Wau and possibly even in Bor.

We are working closely with our humanitarian partners to align our efforts so that people have a real choice to return home. The quality of services inside the protection of civilians sites and outside communities needs to be looked at to provide more balance. Having a first-class medical facility inside a protection of civilians site and no medical support outside clearly deters people from returning to their homes. Those efforts will also coincide with UNMISS efforts to increasingly project our peacekeeping forces from static duties out into communities where they are most needed.

However, ultimately, that movement will critically depend on how the Government and opposition forces behave. Where there is discipline, the results have been encouraging, but where those forces continue to prey on civilians, the protection of civilians site will remain a necessary refuge. Meanwhile, increased efforts are being made to identify malign and criminal elements inside our sites. Identified perpetrators and combatants will be ejected to reinforce the civilian character of the sites.

I wish to briefly address the deployment of the Regional Protection Force (RPF). While the Government has officially repeated its acceptance of the RPF and UNMISS has closely adhered to the Government's clearances and protocols, the positioning of the RPF in relation to Juba airport — including at the Mission's adjacent Tomping base — remains a vexed issue. The RPF mandate is clearly and unambiguously set out in resolutions adopted by the Council. Together with my Force Commander, I am engaging with the Government in discussions over unresolved issues and will reach out to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU) to meet with the Chiefs of Defence Staff from IGAD RPF troop contributors and the Government in Juba, as soon as possible.

We must also remember that the situation on the ground has changed significantly from a year ago, when two separate armies were positioned inside Juba. Today, security threats in Juba, we believe, are more likely to come from civil unrest that is sparked by potential economic collapse. However, the intensity of fighting in the Equatorias was not present a year ago. As a consequence, those areas are where the more than 1 million people who have fled to Uganda have come from. The bolstering of UNMISS forces with the RPF, as it gradually arrives, will enable UNMISS to further project into those areas, in line with its protection of civilians mandate.

Allow me to make a few observations about the current political situation. I believe that the space for

compromise over the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan is narrow. The parties have shown little interest in engaging in serious negotiations on the way forward, despite the various initiatives aimed at finding a political solution to the conflict. The central conflict-resolution strategy must be political mediation via the IGAD high-level revitalization forum.

For its part, the United Nations will continue to support the national dialogue with caution and conditional on its remaining transparent and inclusive. I acknowledge that the process might appear partisan to an increasingly disillusioned and fractured opposition, but in past months it has provided a useful platform for open and highly critical discussion. By engaging with it, we hope to encourage a process that is aligned with best practices, while still nationally driven.

There is both a humanitarian and a political urgency to our meeting here today. In the past week, there has been renewed enthusiasm for and solidarity with the revitalization process. There are only a few months remaining in the transitional period stipulated by the peace agreement. External momentum to support peace is needed. It is critical now that the international community show unity of purpose in supporting an implementable peace process would that lead to credible elections in due course, but only after a period of transition marked by inclusivity and stability.

I am committed to continue that engagement. Together with the Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, we maintain our good offices to engage all parties to meaningfully participate in the political process. We will continue to work with AU High Representative Alpha Oumar Konaré and support IGAD and its Special Envoy Ismael Wais, together with President Mogae and the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, to hasten preparations and convene the high-level revitalization forum to bring the parties together. We will bolster collaboration among the region, the African Union, IGAD and the United Nations to prevent forum-shopping by the parties.

In all of that, South Sudan needs the unified efforts and attention of the Security Council, building on the AU Peace and Security Council collaboration and its communiqué of a few days ago. We are all aware that the country risks remaining a source of continued regional instability and a drain on international resources. The wider region has a critical role to play in convincing the parties of the need to compromise and find peaceful solutions. Collectively, we will need to deliver a clear and unified message to the parties on the way forward. The consultations of the past few days here in New York have been encouraging, but we are backing a process to which we urgently need to add substance. I count on the continued support of those present.

Finally, I want to thank the members of the Council for backing UNMISS over the past week as it has been truly gratifying.

The President: I thank Mr. Shearer for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mogae.

Mr. Mogae: I would like to thank you, Sir, for your kind invitation to me to brief the Security Council today. My briefing will build on the previous update that I provided to the Security Council last month (see S/PV.8030) on the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. I will therefore focus on a quick situation update, including on the forthcoming evaluation report of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) high-level revitalization forum.

Last month, I reported an incident of heavy fighting between the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Government (SPLA-IG) in some areas of the country. The scale of the fighting has changed this month, with the reports from the Cease Fire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism indicating that there has been a relatively lower incidence of fighting between SPLA-IG and the Machar faction of SPLA-IO.

However, fighting was reported between forces of the Taban and Machar factions of SPLA-IO in Unity and Upper Nile states, causing further displacement of civilians. SPLA-IO has denied access to a joint patrol of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and citizens along the Nile, so we are unable to provide a full picture at this time. The situation concerning the control of Pagak in Upper Nile state remains tense as SPLA-IG and SPLA-IO Machar make claims and counter claims.

The Monitoring Mechanism has reported the displacement of 3,000 civilians into Ethiopia. It also reports fighting in the Equatorias and armed robberies in some parts of Eastern Equatoria.

Intercommunal tensions are reported in some parts in the greater Bhar el-Ghazal region and the Maban area, where Vice-President James Wani Igga has been mediating between internally displaced persons and host communities.

We in JMEC are acutely aware that the humanitarian crisis persists mainly owing to the conflict, with 6 million people reporting severe food insecurity and continued inconsistent humanitarian access. JMEC remains fully focused on its mandate to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the peace agreement and is committed to supporting IGAD in its objective to convene a high-level revitalization forum. To that end, yesterday JMEC held an evaluation workshop to review a comprehensive report on the status of the implementation of the peace agreement. Once complete, the report will be presented to IGAD as part of our contribution to ensuring a successful revitalization forum. Allow me to elaborate.

In March, we took the deliberate step of enhancing our oversized role with the formation of six JMEC working committees, in line with the six substantive chapters of the agreement. Their tasks are to continuously review and evaluate the progress in the implementation of the peace agreement and to support and recommend remedial actions to be undertaken. The working committees have held a combined total of 38 meetings to date. They have engaged bilaterally with the Transitional Government of National Unity and other stakeholders, and they have invited briefings from key institutions and mechanisms charged with implementing the agreement.

Consistent with the terms of reference for the revitalization forum, agreed to by IGAD Council of Ministers on 2 July, the JMEC working committees have conducted a full evaluation of the status of the implementation of the peace agreement and prepared a report, which is under consideration. I expect the final report to be published by the end of next week. As I have said, once the report is finalized and adopted by JMEC, it will be presented to IGAD and is intended to mark the starting point for discussion in the revitalization process.

I shall not pre-empt the final report, but overall JMEC maintains the view that despite initial reasonable progress in the formation of the various institutions and bodies, the implementation of the peace agreement was disrupted in July 2016 and, as things stand today, little substantive progress has been made in the implementation of the key provisions. I have previously described the implementation as being modest at best, and from the evaluation reports presented yesterday nothing I have heard nothing to charge my view.

Fundamental to the full report is the irrefutable fact that the permanent ceasefire has been and continues to be violated by all parties with impunity, and as such, security has deteriorated to a critical level. Of underlying importance is the fracturing of SPLA-IO into two factions — one under the First Vice-President, General Taban Deng Gai, and the other under the former First Vice-President, Mr. Riek Machar, who is now in exile in South Africa. The expansion of the number of states from 10 to 32, in contravention of the peace agreement, has also fundamentally and adversely affected the intended power-sharing formula.

While some progress has been made, it is greatly disappointing that after two years, there are several transitional institutions and mechanisms that have yet to be established, including the special fund for reconstruction, the economic and financial management authority, the compensation and reparations authority and key transitional justice institutions. Most importantly, there has been no progress whatsoever in the permanent constitution-making process.

JMEC recommendations are that there must be an immediate ceasefire and an end to all forms of violence. There is a fundamental need for the demonstration of political will by the parties to undertake their responsibility to implement the provisions of the agreement. All forms of obstruction to the delivery of humanitarian aid must be removed. The Transitional Government of National Unity must expedite and conclude the constitutional and legislative amendments and initiate without further delay the permanent constitution-making process.

In preparation for the return of the displaced persons, a joint framework should be developed by the Transitional Government of National Unity, in collaboration with humanitarian partners. The Security Council, in collaboration with IGAD, the African Union and international partners, should put in place mechanisms to enforce compliance.

In the coming weeks, IGAD will convene a high-level revitalization forum and I wish to take the opportunity to reaffirm our complete commitment to that process. Together with one voice, we can

challenge those who believe in the military solution to the conflict. We urge the Government and all parties concerned to engage in the inclusive political process. The revitalization forum convened by IGAD is the best opportunity to restore peace and rebuild governance in South Sudan.

If implemented credibly and inclusively, national dialogue can play a complementary role in delivering long-term reconciliation. Given current conditions around the country, mass displacement, severe food insecurity and the total lack of institutional and constitutional infrastructure, it is clear that elections will not be feasible by the end of the current transitional period. Therefore, the high-level revitalization forum is the best hope for reigniting the political process.

We hope that the evaluation conducted by the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission will enable parties, the region and all South Sudanese stakeholders to pursue the revitalization process from an informed point of view. We encourage them to take concrete steps to revitalize the implementation of the peace agreement without further delay.

The President: I thank Mr. Mogae for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I would like to thank Mr. Shearer for his briefing. I also thank President Mogae for his briefing and his tireless efforts to bring peace to South Sudan.

The people of South Sudan are suffering and the promise of their hard-fought independence is slipping away. In fact, we are so concerned about the deteriorating situation in South Sudan and elsewhere in Central and East Africa that President Trump has asked me to go to Africa in October. While there, I will go to Juba as a representative of my Government, but also as a representative of the Security Council.

Six months have passed since the Security Council demanded that the warring parties in South Sudan cease fighting and return to the negotiation table. In each month since then, we have gathered here to lament the terrible situation in South Sudan. Each month, we have urged the parties to stop fighting. We have called on them to stop obstructing the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). We have watched in dismay as hundreds of people have been forced to flee their homes every day and as hunger has set in.

Each month, we have watched the situation in South Sudan become worse, not better, and we issue still more calls to action. We are disappointed that the Council refuses to stem the flow of arms to South Sudan or punish those who victimize their own people. Still, we know that the real responsibility and power for change lies with South Sudan's leaders, but so far, the Government of South Sudan has not responded to the pleas of the Council to create an inclusive Government and put an end to the fighting. There is a great deal of work left to do.

The violence and destruction have left 2 million South Sudanese displaced, 2 million refugees, 6 million facing near-famine conditions and countless dead. The impact on children has been especially severe. Seventeen thousand children have been abducted or recruited into armed groups. More than 15,000 children have been pulled apart from their families and other loved ones. More than 1.1 million children face acute malnutrition and barely half of school-age children are in the classrooms. Those are sobering statistics with dire implications for the safety, well-being and future of an entire generation. The United Nations Mission is in South Sudan to respond to the crisis, help protect civilians and ease their suffering. UNMISS shelters more than 200,000 civilians at sites across the country. It tries to reach more, but its operations are continually frustrated.

We call on the Government of South Sudan to welcome the assistance of the Mission and cooperate with it fulfilling its mandate for the South Sudanese people. The United States is not waiting to act. Earlier in September, we imposed economic and financial sanctions against individuals who have obstructed the peace process, denied access to humanitarian assistance and interfered with the peacekeeping mission. The United States will do what it can to reduce the suffering in South Sudan and the Security Council and regional actors must do more, but our ultimate message to the South Sudanese leaders will be that they must seize the opportunity to take the initiative. They have a way to stop the violence.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development has presented them with a way to quickly resuscitate the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, but time is running out. It is the last chance at salvaging the peace agreement in South Sudan. The different parties to the conflict must use the next several weeks to commit themselves to the

process and conclude it. Our hope is that South Sudan's leaders will seize the opportunity. If they do not, we must resolve now, both individually and collectively, to do more to end the conflict.

As for the people of South Sudan, we look forward to delivering the message in person very soon that we have not forgotten or given up on them. The people of South Sudan have a friend and advocate in the United States of America.

Mr. Allen: (United Kingdom): At the outset, let me take the opportunity to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Shearer, and President Mogae for their briefings. I reiterate the full support of the United Kingdom for the vital work of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission in difficult circumstances in South Sudan.

Two years ago, the people of South Sudan rejoiced at the signing of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. It was a symbol of hope for the young country, which had so quickly been plunged again into war by the rivalries of its leaders. Now, that document is a stark reminder of all that the Government has failed to deliver for South Sudan. As the Secretary-General said, the signatories to the peace agreement have demonstrated time and again that they are deaf to the distress of their own people and unmoved by calls for peace from the international community.

Conflict, hunger and horrific sexual violence have become commonplace. There has been gang rape, the recruitment of child soldiers and attacks on schools and hospitals. Nearly 2 million people are on the brink of famine and half of the population is food insecure. Yet, non-governmental organizations report that those starving are often too afraid to collect life-saving aid for fear of being attacked on the way home by those charged to protect them. We cannot even begin to imagine the choices that the people of South Sudan are being forced to make.

The suffering is forcing millions of civilians to flee, creating the largest refugee crisis in Africa and the fastest growing refugee crisis in the world. Today, we have been presented with a yet another set of reports that demonstrate that the Government's declared ceasefire is meaningless. Government forces continue large-scale military operations, which have caused dire humanitarian consequences and disrupted life-saving humanitarian operations. Suffering on such a scale cannot be allowed to continue. South Sudan cannot continue on its current path.

As President Mogae has rightly stated, the international community must act and speak with one voice. In that vein, the United Kingdom strongly welcomes the joint efforts of the United Nations, the regional countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union to bring the suffering of the South Sudanese people and the fighting to an end. Those messages were reiterated at the high-level meeting on South Sudan on 20 September and echo of the calls that the Council made in March in our presidential statement S/PRST/2017/4.

We welcome the leadership shown by the regional countries of IGAD in launching the high-level revitalization forum and offer our full support, as I believe all members of the Security Council do, to this initiative's objective of revitalizing the peace agreement. If it is to succeed, it will take a concerted and united push from all countries in the region and a commitment to staying the course. The first priority for that process must be the laying down of arms once and for all. There is no military solution to this crisis, and lasting peace will be achieved only through the inclusion of all groups, armed or not.

We cannot expect success overnight. We must see the revitalization forum as a process, not a one-off meeting, although we must also guard against drift. Success will require all the parties, particularly the Government, to demonstrate the commitment and the political will to pursue peace, which have been lacking so far. The United Kingdom therefore calls on all parties to the Agreement, as well as estranged and other opposition groups, to respond positively and constructively to this opportunity for dialogue. We agree with others that at this stage elections would be premature. The United Kingdom has repeatedly stated that there must be consequences for those who seek to obstruct peace, and we have long called for sanctions against spoilers.

We therefore support last week's African Union Peace and Security Council communiqué and its call for all the necessary steps, including sanctions, to be considered against all who continue to obstruct efforts to restore peace and security in South Sudan. The international community, including the Security Council, must be prepared to act against those who

continue to impede progress towards peace and make the people of South Sudan suffer. We should make it clear to them that they will face sanctions if they do not participate fully in the IGAD process. As the communiqué says, South Sudan can no longer be treated in a routine manner. The United Kingdom stands ready to support the region and use all the tools at its disposal, collectively and individually, to compel the parties to choose peace.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to thank Mr. David Shearer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan, and Mr. Festus Mogae, Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, for their briefings, which have given us a very complete picture of the latest events in South Sudan.

The civilian population is suffering the terrible consequences of the prolonged crisis in South Sudan, whose own politicians are chiefly responsible for the situation. We should never lose sight of the horrendous suffering that the South Sudanese have had to undergo for far too long. The principal cause of the country's crisis is the fact that its political leaders have put their personal ambitions for power above the needs of their people. To date, 4 million civilians have been driven from their homes, 1.9 million of them internally displaced and more than 2 million as refugees, while 6 million — half the population — are facing high levels of food insecurity, including 1.7 million who are on the brink of starvation.

What is most alarming is that the situation seems only to be getting worse. The clashes between groups in various parts of the country continue, while there has been no tangible progress on the implementation of the August 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. As if that were not enough, humanitarian workers, who in many cases are the only lifeline for the people most in need of help, are operating in an increasingly hostile environment, with limited access to those in need and under direct attack by all the parties to the conflict.

Given this difficult situation, Uruguay urges all parties to fulfil their promise to end the hostilities immediately and commit in good faith to a dialogue process on implementing the peace agreement. We should point out that President Kiir has launched a national dialogue process and, most recently, announced a unilateral ceasefire in May. In addition, we urge the Government of South Sudan to restore political freedoms which are essential to peace, ensure respect for human rights and hold the perpetrators of human rights violations accountable. It will also be crucial to ensure a secure and respectful environment that will enable humanitarian staff to carry out the enormous, difficult and urgent task of assisting those who are most in need.

Despite the complexity and difficulty of the situation in South Sudan, the international community is still working as hard as it can to revitalize the peace process. For example, in September 2016 the Council visited the country, and issued a presidential statement in March (S/PRST/2017/4). And we are also grateful for the efforts of the United Nations, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, among other stakeholders. In our view, and as Mr. Mogae has repeatedly stated, all the parties seeking a solution to the conflict must speak with one voice, while sending a firm and unequivocal message to the groups involved in the conflict. In that regard, we commend the coordination by the United Nations, the African Union and IGAD of a number of events that took place on the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly. We also look forward to IGAD's convening of the high-level revitalization forum on the August 2015 peace agreement, which will be a good opportunity to revitalize the political process in South Sudan and lay the groundwork for the holding of democratic elections at the end of the transition period.

Finally, we would like to highlight the tireless efforts of Mr. Shearer and the staff of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan in fulfilling their appointed tasks. We also look forward to seeing the full and speedy deployment of the Regional Protection Force, which will no doubt help to increase stability in the country.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I thank Mr. Shearer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and President Mogae, Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, for their comprehensive briefings.

As the serious overall situation in South Sudan continues unabated, our message also remains unchanged. The violations of the ceasefire and restrictions on humanitarian access must stop and the Government of South Sudan must cooperate fully with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

First Vice-President Taban Deng Gai committed to action on each of those areas at the General Assembly last week (see A/72/PV.19), and the Government must demonstrate concrete results in that regard. The Council should remain united in sending a strong message to the Government and the opposition.

The human costs of the ongoing conflict are enormous. Nearly a third of the South Sudanese, many of them women and children, are internally displaced or have become refugees. Half of the population is food insecure. The international community's continued efforts are needed to fully fund the humanitarian response plan. On 19 September, Japan announced that it would provide $3 million in emergency grant aid to the World Food Programme and the Food and Agricultural Organization to help address food insecurity in South Sudan. But unhindered access and protection for humanitarian personnel are essential.

The only solution to these challenges is through the political process, and Japan continues to underline the importance of ensuring a genuinely inclusive political process that encompasses a national dialogue. We strongly support the efforts led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to organize the high-level revitalization forum. Like others, we welcome the African Union Peace and Security Council's strong communiqué of 20 September, which sends the message that while this process represents a unique window of opportunity, it is also the parties' last chance to achieve true peace and stability.

We commend the robust posture of UNMISS under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Shearer. The deployment of the Regional Protection Force is also a positive development and we look forward to its completion as soon as possible, with full cooperation among the Government, the troop-contributing countries and UNMISS. The situation in South Sudan remains extremely difficult, but the revitalization efforts and UNMISS's work offer a way forward. Japan will continue to support the people of South Sudan in their quest for lasting peace and security.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. David Shearer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as Mr. Festus Mogae, Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, for their substantive briefings.

We believe that it will be possible to stabilize the situation in South Sudan only if there is a lasting ceasefire and the start of an inclusive national reconciliation process. We note that certain progress has been made in that regard, in the form of the gradual implementation of President Kiir's initiative, launched in May, to begin a nationwide dialogue, with the participation of every ethnic group, political actor and population sector, aimed at achieving national reconciliation and ending the conflict in South Sudan. We agree with the Secretariat that this can be viewed as a supplement to the process initiated by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for revitalizing the August 2015 peace agreement. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan in promoting intercommunal reconciliation at the local level.

We have once again been compelled to turn our attention to the dire humanitarian repercussions of the crisis in South Sudan. Its escalation is having extremely negative repercussions in the subregion, producing a significant spike in the influx of refugees into neighbouring countries. In our view, it would not be fair to lay all the blame for the persistent violence entirely at the Government's door. It is impossible for the unilateral ceasefire that Mr. Kiir announced in May to be implemented without reciprocal measures on the part of the opposition.

We continue to believe that threatening the Government with targeted sanctions or an arms embargo would not help to solve the crisis, and might in fact exacerbate it. During our recent visit to Addis Ababa, the members of the Council were able to see for themselves how wary the regional players are about increasing the sanctions pressure.

We are pleased that the deployment of the Regional Protection Force is under way in South Sudan. We trust that IGAD and the Secretariat will continue working with the South Sudan Government on mutually acceptable modalities for the operation, including the involvement of the Regional Protection Force in the area of Juba airport. That is a requisite of the basic principles of peacekeeping.

We call on South Sudan and the troop-contributing countries to help the Regional Protection Force reach operational readiness. We welcome the Secretary-General's personal involvement in the efforts to achieve a settlement in South Sudan and commend the

cooperation among the African Union, IGAD and the United Nations. We hope that the current preparations for the IGAD-led revitalization forum for the peace agreement will enable it to succeed. While noting the Kampala and Nairobi mediation efforts, we share the Secretary-General's opinion that those processes require tight coordination. We would also like to note the importance of ensuring that the regional Powers maintain a united approach to the settlement of the crisis in South Sudan. Attempts to advance short-sighted national agendas, let alone to compete with neighbours in the region where South Sudan is concerned, could have disastrous consequences for the peace process.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): I would like to join previous speakers in thanking Special Representative Shearer and Chair Mogae for their comprehensive and insightful briefings.

My country is concerned about the slow implementation of the South Sudan Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, since it remains the only viable option for achieving sustainable peace, and we appreciate the work of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in organizing the anxiously awaited high-level revitalization forum, which aims to include all parties in the effort to effectively implement the Agreement. At the same time, we must ensure that the national dialogue launched in May is truly inclusive and transparent. Such a dialogue requires a much wider collaboration among the Transitional Government, the African Union, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and IGAD. We also commend the efforts of Presidents Museveni and Konaré, as well as other stakeholders, to bring peace to South Sudan.

The crisis in South Sudan can end only if all these peace initiatives are well coordinated. We support the communiqué adopted on 20 September at the African Union Peace and Security Council ministerial meeting on the situation in South Sudan, and join others in underscoring how important it is that all stakeholders speak with one voice, thus avoiding mixed messages being sent to the parties in South Sudan. The support of the African Union, working closely with the United Nations, is integral to calming intentions and making improvements on many fronts. But we must also acknowledge that the conflict in South Sudan cannot be resolved or managed exclusively through political negotiations, because security and development are interdependent. If we are to address complex causes of conflict we must design effective strategies for international assistance in many areas, including sustainable economic growth, infrastructure and road-building, intercommunal reconciliation and preservation of the environment.

We are seriously concerned about the fact that, despite the ceasefire declaration and generally limited mobility, owing to the rainy season, military operations have continued in Jonglei, Upper Nile and the Equatorias, leading to a sharp escalation in humanitarian-access incidents, extreme food insecurity and the numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons. We therefore urge all parties to restore the permanent ceasefire and immediately stop attacking, arresting and detaining UNMISS and humanitarian personnel. It will be important to make the perpetrators of such violations accountable, and we welcome the recent progress made in establishing the Hybrid Court. Kazakhstan also appreciates the progress achieved in deploying the Regional Protection Force, which will play a key role in protecting civilians and improving the security environment. We welcome the decision of the Kenyan Government to participate in the Regional Protection Force and hope that the remaining issues will be resolved speedily and the deployment process completed on time.

In conclusion, Kazakhstan emphasizes the need for the regional and international communities to foster constructive understanding and trusting, mutually beneficial relations if we are to achieve the goal we all share of peace and security in South Sudan. We therefore believe that Mr. Shearer's latest meeting with President Kiir represents the beginning of an improved working relationship between UNMISS and the Transitional Government.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would like to thank Special Representative Shearer and President Mogae for their sobering reports on the situation in South Sudan. Like others, we are deeply concerned about this level of continued fighting. After four years of conflict, the civilian population continues to suffer from a lack on the part of the stakeholders of the political commitment and will needed to find a peaceful solution. But momentum is now building around regional efforts to end the conflict. We welcome the strong leadership shown by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU) and fully support the process for revitalizing the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of

South Sudan, as was discussed at the IGAD Plus Plus meeting last week. We call for the swift convening of IGAD's high-level revitalization forum on South Sudan and urge that it be substantive. It represents a unique opportunity to bring all the stakeholders together, and we urge all parties to engage in the process in good faith. The steps outlined in the African Union Peace and Security Council communiqué of 20 September provide a road map for the way forward. We welcome the proposal to convene regular tripartite meetings between the United Nations Special Envoy, the AU High Representative and the IGAD Special Envoy as a way to ensure better coordination and impact.

As we discussed in detail during our recent visit to Addis Ababa and with the African Union, only a political solution will end the crisis. To that end, an immediate cessation of hostilities by all parties — the Government and armed groups alike — is paramount, not only to alleviate the suffering of civilians but to enable a meaningful and inclusive political process. Under the current circumstances, with massive displacement, elections cannot be held in a free, fair and inclusive manner.

The Security Council must remain united in its support for intensified regional efforts. We must strive to bring the international community together so as to speak with one voice, as many have said here today and as the African Union Peace and Security Council communiqué calls for. As Council members, we must also live up to our own responsibilities by being prepared to follow through on our decisions. That means standing by the provisions of the presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/4) that we adopted six months ago, including preparing for further measures if needed, in lockstep with the African Union Peace and Security Council.

As we heard at last week's high-level meeting on the humanitarian situation in South Sudan, the situation for the people there continues to worsen, with more than half of the population in need of assistance. We call on the Government to facilitate the work of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and humanitarian organizations, and to ensure that relief workers are protected. In that regard, we welcome the deployment of the first company of the Regional Protection Force and expect that the outstanding issues regarding its full deployment will be resolved swiftly.

We commend UNMISS for its continuing efforts to protect civilians, but we are still very concerned about the allegations of violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law, and regret the fact that UNMISS's ability to monitor and verify such violations and abuses, including sexual violence, is hindered by insecurity and restrictions on its freedom of movement. We stress the importance of establishing a Hybrid Court without delay and welcome the African Union efforts to finalize a memorandum of understanding with the Government towards that goal. It will be an important step towards combating impunity and hopefully a strong deterrent to atrocity crimes.

With initiatives for peace in South Sudan moving forward, we should consider ways to strengthen the participation of women in the process. We encourage UNMISS to support women's full and active participation of in those processes and encourage the Secretary-General to continue to highlight both violence against women and the participation of women in his reports.

The suffering of South Sudan has gone on far too long, and we call on all stakeholders to end the conflict. The current efforts of IGAD and the African Union need our full support. The momentum must not be lost.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): Like other Security Council members, I thank Special Representative Shearer for his briefing and the dedication with which he is implementing the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), in accordance with the three-tiered approach to the protection of civilians. I also thank President Mogae for updating us today and welcome his call to the international community to speak with one voice on the South Sudanese crisis.

Italy considers three fundamental aspects in assessing the situation in South Sudan — the humanitarian situation, human rights and national reconciliation and the peace process. The continued violations of the ceasefire are forcing thousands of South Sudanese to leave their houses, villages and lands every day. The humanitarian situation in South Sudan is an emergency involving half the country's population. Neighbouring countries are called on daily to stanch this human haemorrhage with their limited means and the risk that the instability will soon spread to more areas of the region. Working for a shared solution for peace in South Sudan also means healing this wound on the African continent. While we all have a moral imperative to help

South Sudan, for regional actors it also represents a geopolitical burden.

The tragic situation in South Sudan has been further exacerbated by serious human rights violations. The conflict encourages impunity, sexual and gender-based violence and the recruitment and use of child soldiers, as well as constraining freedom of opinion and speech. All of this is slowly destroying the young South Sudanese nation. We firmly believe that without justice, there can never be true national reconciliation. We welcome the conclusion of the preparatory work by the African Union, with the support of the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, for establishing a Hybrid Court, and hope that the South Sudanese authorities will quickly follow up in accordance with chapter 7 of the peace agreement.

Finally, with regard to the peace process, in the past two weeks some small but important steps forward were made at a meeting held in New York. The communiqué issued after the thirteenth meeting of the United Nations-African Union Joint Task Force, the African Union Peace and Security Council, the high-level summit convened by the Secretary-General and other events all came out in support of the IGAD high-level revitalization forum. With Ethiopia, Italy co-chairs the IGAD Partner Forum, which has been strongly supportive, politically and financially, of IGAD efforts to improve regional stability.

As we have consistently stated since we joined the Security Council, the crisis in South Sudan is also a regional one. It is up to IGAD to lead international action for reconciliation there, with the support of the African Union and the United Nations. We therefore reiterate our support to the revitalization forum, agreeing that this is "a last chance for the parties to really achieve sustainable peace and stability in South Sudan", as the Peace and Security Council of the African Union stated in its communiqué of 20 September.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I thank Special Representative Shearer and President Mogae for their detailed updates, and most of all for their tremendous efforts to restore peace in South Sudan.

The situation in South Sudan remains volatile. Despite the declared ceasefires and the effects of the rainy season, the fighting has continued throughout the country, bringing only more civilian casualties, more destruction of infrastructure, more displacement and more food insecurity. Moreover, the fear looms that the armed clashes may further intensify when the dry season begins.

Ukraine continues to believe that there can be no military solution to the crisis in South Sudan. A genuine political process within the framework of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan is the only viable option for addressing the current challenges in South Sudan. The leadership and other stakeholders in the country must not only demonstrate their political will, but prove their commitment to peace through their concrete deeds.

International support for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in South Sudan reached an unprecedented level last week. It is remarkable that three major organizations — the United Nations, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority for Development — were united in their desire to put an end to the suffering of the South Sudanese people. My delegation welcomes the outcome of the African Union Peace and Security Council ministerial meeting on South Sudan held in New York a few days ago. We believe that the communiqué issued after the meeting sends a clear message that the status quo is not sustainable. We also fully agree that the situation in South Sudan can no longer be treated in a routine manner, including in the Security Council. Urgent steps and decisions must be taken if we are to ensure that the current momentum does not become yet another lost opportunity for peace and stability in South Sudan. In this light, I want to highlight three points.

First, the fighting must stop. No political process has a chance of succeeding under the whizz of bullets. We call on all stakeholders to cease hostilities and commit to a permanent ceasefire without preconditions and in good faith.

Secondly, the political dialogue must be inclusive, transparent and independent. The commencement of activity of the National Dialogue Committee is a positive step forward. To succeed, it must enjoy the full support of all major groups of South Sudanese society. As it was underscored in the African Union Peace and Security Council communiqué, the national dialogue should complement, and not be perceived as as replacement for, the full implementation of the peace agreement and the revitalization process led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Council of Ministers.

That brings me to my third and final point. Ukraine looks forward to the high-level revitalization forum, which should create new momentum for the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. In that regard, it is crucially important that all actors involved fully coordinate their efforts and speak with one voice.

In conclusion, I want to underline that there can be no more excuses for not having peace in South Sudan. The international community is ready and willing to assist the Government of South Sudan. In turn, the Government of South Sudan must finally deliver on its own commitments.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. David Shearer, as well as the Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, President Festus Mogae, for their thorough briefings. Faced with such a bitter and, at times, discouraging assessment of this persistant conflict, I would like to focus on two points in particular.

First of all, upon having the magnitude of the daily tragedy recalled to us, I commend the efforts of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and of the humanitarian staff who provide critical assistance to people in South Sudan. The figures are staggering and point to the sheer scale of the crisis, which is worsened by the particularly dire conditions in South Sudan, particularly for those who deliver aid to the population.

South Sudan is indeed among the most dangerous countries for humanitarian workers, 18 of whom have been killed since the beginning of this year. We cannot tolerate this situation. We firmly condemn the attacks and access restrictions targeting UNMISS personnel as well as humanitarian actors.

We call upon all parties to respect international humanitarian law and provide access to the most vulnerable people. Enabling humanitarian staff to do their work in conflict zones is a core requirement that must be upheld. Such attacks against humanitarian workers, facilitated by the proliferation of weapons in South Sudan, serve as a reminder of the importance of considering the imposition of an arms embargo to deprive parties to the conflict of opportunities to perpetrate such violence.

In this difficult context, the protection of civilians remains imperative. France welcomes the efforts of UNMISS in carrying out its mandate under Mr. Shearer's stewardship. The robust posture that he has adopted to provide better protection for civilians is critical while the violence persists. The deployment of the first Regional Protection Force units is an encouraging development, although unfortunately this occurred more than a year after the Council's decided to establish it. It is crucial that the deadlock be broken as soon as possible.

Secondly, I would like to underscore the importance of moving the political process forward. We are aware that a lasting settlement to the crisis in South Sudan can only be political and can only be achieved with regional support. The launch of the high-level revitalization forum for the 2015 peace agreement should help advance this process. France commends the commitment of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and calls upon the African Union Peace and Security Council to ensure that the forum be made a reality as soon as possible, as is explicitly called for in the 20 September Communiqué. The parties must address these initiatives and fully commit themselves to the success of the forum.

The progress reports proposed by the Peace and Security Council, as well as the threat and imposition of sanctions against those seeking to hamper these efforts, should contribute to rapid progress being made. France welcomes the efforts of various stakeholders to make the forum a reality, in particularly the IGAD Special Envoy, the African Union High Representative and the Special Envoy to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, as well as Special Representative Shearer and President Mogae.

Smooth coordination by all in this undertaking is the key to success. France considers it equally critical to continue working to ensure an inclusive national dialogue so as to contribute to building lasting peace. We are further encouraged by the call of the Peace and Security Council for the establishment of the Hybrid Court stipulated by the peace agreement. The struggle against impunity is indispensable for achieving lasting peace in South Sudan.

The commitment of both our Council and the region are critical in order to bring about peace in South Sudan. Together we must take advantage of the next few weeks

to build upon these efforts for the benefit of the people of the South Sudan.

Mr. Zhang Dianbin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China wishes to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Shearer, and the Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, President Mogae, for their respective briefings.

Since the beginning of the year, the Transitional Government in South Sudan has been committed to the resolution of the issue of South Sudan. The national dialogue launched by the South Sudanese Transitional Government and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is preparing to hold the South Sudan high-level revitalization forum. During the previous session of the General Assembly, the United Nations, the African Union (AU) and IGAD held a high-level meeting on South Sudan. The AU Peace and Securiy Council also had a ministerial meeting on the South Sudan issue.

Parties attending those meetings enhanced communication and reached consensus. China welcomes such a development. At the same time, we also note that the situation in South Sudan is very fragile: there is continued armed conflict, slow political progress, a dire humanitarian situation and a severe economic recession. South Sudan needs the continued assistance of the international community.

First and foremost, it is imperative that we encourage all parties to the conflict to return to the political track in order to achieve a cessation of hostilities and a ceasefire. China supports the national dialogue and the high-level revitalization forum on the South Sudan peace agreement, which is an important opportunity for South Sudan to achieve political reconciliation and implement the Agreement. In that connection, the international community should enhance its level of support. At the same time, the parties must enhance coordination and synergy in order to reach a political settlement.

The AU, IGAD and other regional countries and organizations must seize this opportunity for greater involvement in the mediation process, while coordinating and cooperating in order to fully utilize their respective strengths and advantages. In that connection, the Security Council should play a coordinating role so as to ensure that the AU and IGAD can assume leadership roles in the mediation process.

Secondly, the leadership role of the South Sudanese Government must be fully respected in terms of dealing with internal affairs. To ultimately address this issue, efforts must be made by the South Sudanese Transitional Government and its own people. Only by mobilizing this initiative on the part of the South Sudanese Transitional Government can assistance from the international community be much more productive and efficient. Before proposing solutions, the international community should engage with the South Sudanese Government in full consultation in order to avoid forcefully imposing any solutions.

Thirdly, the matter of economic assistance merits attention in order to address the root causes of the South Sudanese crises. The severe economic recession and people living in hardship are important root causes of the South Sudanese question. On 23 September, the First Vice-President of South Sudan, Mr. Taban Deng Gai, delivered a speech at the General Assembly (see A/72/PV.19) in which he expressed the hope that there would be increased support from the international community for South Sudan in order to enhance social cohesion and allow the South Sudanese people to engage in post-war construction.

While the international community is providing support to South Sudan — for example, in conducting blood transfusions — there must be greater input into economic foundations such as agriculture, energy and infrastructure. That will make South Sudan far more self-reliant, including in being able to ensure its own blood supply.

The Chinese Government has consistently supported the South Sudanese peace process through both bilateral and multilateral channels, including the Security Council, to promote development in South Sudan. To date, there are over 1,000 Chinese peacekeepers working in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. Since the beginning of the year, China has provided $5 million in humanitarian assistance through the World Food Programme and has also donated through its bilateral channel 8,550 tons of food aid to the country. China is willing to continue to play its constructive role in helping South Sudan achieve lasting peace, stability and sustainable development.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Festus Mogae and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. David Shearer, for their briefings today.

With great sadness, we see that South Sudan is experiencing a serious political, security, humanitarian and economic crisis, which has shown no improvement in recent months. To the contrary, seen in the most generous light, the situation has stalled. Millions of South Sudanese people need humanitarian aid. The conditions for displaced persons and refugees are alarming; women and children are suffering from food insecurity and lack basic services; and there have been outbreaks of such diseases as cholera and measles — just to mention some of the problems in the country. Restrictions on access to humanitarian aid is therefore inadmissible. The parties must ensure unimpeded and safe access for all humanitarian workers and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) on a permanent basis.

We condemn the clashes that have been taking place in the Upper Nile region. We continue to believe that the first step towards peace is the immediate cessation of hostilities between the parties. Although the Government declared a ceasefire, it sadly was not carried out. If clashes persist, there will be no way to establish a dialogue. We regret the obvious lack of political will.

The solution to the conflict in South Sudan will be through a credible political process and an inclusive dialogue that will lead to compliance with the 2015 Agreement. Accordingly, we should support the initiatives of the regional organizations. We emphasize that both the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have taken a stance in a timely in order to firmly address the main measures that need to be taken immediately. The African Union Peace and Security Council's communiqué of 20 September called for the parties to join efforts that were recently undertaken to create momentum and restore the political process in South Sudan through a high-level revitalization forum upon the initiative of IGAD. It is important that there be complementarity among the initiatives, and efforts need to be unified.

Another important item is to submit a memorandum of understanding for establishing the Hybrid Court. We believe that accountability would help the processes of reconciliation and recovery that are key to establishing lasting peace. It is vital that this process be led by the African Union, and we would highlight the willingness of the Government to move forward with the establishment of the Court.

With respect to the deployment of the Regional Protection Force (RPF), we applaud the good offices of the Special Representative in facilitating the arrival of the Rwanda advance team. It is important to work together with the Government to allow for the proper functioning of the RPF. Similarly, we look forward to the deployment of the Ethiopian troops in the coming weeks. The RPF presence will enable UNMISS to address the conflict, protect civilians and provide humanitarian assistance more effectively.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNMISS for the work and sacrifices they have made in South Sudan. Their focus on protecting civilians is noteworthy. We express our greatest support for this work.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malwal (South Sudan): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming your duties as the President of the Security Council for this month. I assure you of our delegation's support and cooperation for the remaining days of your presidency.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Mr. David Shearer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and President Festus Mogae, Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, for their service to the people of South Sudan.

I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation to you, Mr. President, and to the other members of the Security Council for giving me this opportunity to share our views on the Secretary-General's letter of 15 September 2017 to the Security Council, and on his report on the security and humanitarian situation in South Sudan and the role of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (S/2017/784). Although there are allegations in the report whose accuracy can be debated, my intention is not to argue or contest those allegations; rather, I want the Council and the parties concerned to know that it is not the policy of the Government of South Sudan either to interfere with the UNMISS mandate or to hinder humanitarian access.

My delegation further acknowledges the fact that many difficult circumstances and challenges remain for UNMISS in the Republic of South Sudan. There are also signs of improvement and some progress that we

hope to build upon. We hope to build upon the close consultation, cooperation and manner with which the Government and the leadership of UNMISS resolved the issue of the Rwandan advance team of the Regional Protection Force. We hope to build lasting trust so as to improve working relations between the Government and the United Nations.

Our delegation to the General Assembly conducted a series of meetings on the situation in South Sudan with the leadership of United Nations agencies and funds, including the Secretary-General. We also held bilateral meetings with many Member States. Our delegation received several messages from the international community during those meetings, including the ministerial communiqué of the African Union Peace and Security Council issued in New York on 20 September, which my delegation acknowledges. Accordingly, the Government will analyse and review those messages, and we hope that the Government will come out with more policies designed to enhance cooperation and improve the day-to-day communications and interaction between governmental agencies and UNMISS.

In conclusion, we hope that in his next quarterly report the Secretary-General will note an improved environment for UNMISS and humanitarian organizations in the Republic of South Sudan.

The President: I would like to express my appreciation to President Mogae for having joined us and for his excellent briefing,

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.